

Museum Notes

for the week of July 5 – 11, 2026
by Kristen Parrott, curator

As part of our summer celebration of the U.S. 250th, the Vernon County Historical Society is hosting a public reading of the Declaration of Independence on Wednesday, July 8, at 5PM. This event will commemorate the first public reading of the Declaration, 250 years ago on July 8, 1776, in Philadelphia. Americans in all 50 states and 16 territories of the United States will be reading the Declaration of Independence “together” at the same time on July 8 this year.

Our reading will take place outside at the Vernon County Museum and History Center, located at the corner of S. Main St. and E. South St. in Viroqua. Many readers from the community will take part, each reading a different portion from the Declaration. Everyone is welcome to attend. In case of rain, the event will move inside to the conference room.

Gravestones will be the topic of the next genealogy class, which will be held at the history center on Thursday, July 9, at 10AM. Teacher Karen Sherry will talk about the symbols found on historic gravestones. Weeping willows, pointing or clasping hands, urns, and angels are just a few of the designs and figures found on old stones in cemeteries. Family history buffs love to wander through old cemeteries looking for ancestors, and the graves of unrelated people can be just as interesting.

New students are always welcome to join the class. Vernon County Historical Society members attend for free, and non-members are asked to pay \$5 per session. Classes are held in the first-floor, wheelchair-accessible, air-conditioned conference room.

One all-American story that you can read this summer of the 250th is that of lifelong Vernon County resident Duane Hoff. His autobiography, *Never Enough Wheels*, has just been published this year, 2026, four years after his death in 2022. The book has been edited and distributed by family and friends. It's arranged by decades, the 1930's into the 2000's, and is full of family photos and stories of local people. Duane and his wife Dana owned Hoff's Mobil Service Station on Viroqua's Main Street for nearly 40 years. The slim softcover book costs \$10, and you purchase it at our museum's gift shop.